

Child and Family Services Update

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Director's Message



By Richard Anderson

How Do You Like Things to Fit?

Shoes that are too tight - pants that don't want to stay up - hats that won't stay on - rows of benches without leg room - a chair where your feet won't touch the floor...add your own least favorite misfit. It's just so uncomfortable to not have things fit, isn't it? I remember as a young child going to the first day of the school year with new Levi's. New Levi's in those days were very stiff and had to be purchased too big because they would shrink greatly every time they were washed. Those big, stiff pants were gathered all around my waist with a tight belt. The bottoms were rolled up almost to my knees - knees that because of the stiffness of the pants were now too stiff to bend. For sure, grandmother did have a long-term view that fit our culture of near poverty. Those jeans had to last forever. They were still not a good fit.

Now, why am I telling you a story about my pants for the first of each elementary school year? I just wanted to make a bridge to things that don't fit - and some things are much more important fits. The one I want to address is child and family plans. There cannot be any fit that is more important than a plan that determines how or if my children will stay with me or come back to me. But, if you don't know me, if my strong points are not recognized, if my true needs are not acknowledged, then all of the most important fits will be much more than uncomfortable - they will be unlivable.

A child and family plan that fits right flows from relationships where enough trust allows for honest exchange of information, where strengths are spotted early, when real needs are discovered, and nothing important is ignored. The functional assessment is what we use to learn family patterns and for how to make a right-fit service plan. The assessment determines who needs to be on the team, what is already in place in the family that can be used for resolve, and what really needs to change or to be met more fully (underlying needs). The plan is an outcome from the assessment(s) (knowing that we combine all previous assessments with new ones). It is fitted to the needs and strengths of the children and family. Sometimes the plan must be set out in stages so the family can grow into it, much like my Levi's. The plan should state time frames for when certain items are to be completed, so as not be confused that all has to be done at once. To tailor well-made clothing, build a home or remodeling to fit our needs, or creating anything that fits well starts with a good plan. Are not the lives of the children and families we work with more important? If the plans were being prepared for our own families, would we not want our assessments measured carefully with compassion and understanding, and our family plans to be creations of comfort and fit that would give us hope for the future? We must listen carefully, ask questions, test and retest the rightness of fit. By the end of the school year the Levi's were finally comfortable, even friendlier, and they fit just right. I had grown some and the Levi's had shrunk some. Just

about the time I decided that the Levi's were the right fit, grandmother usually decided I needed new ones.

Protection



Linking CPS Workers and Supervisors to National Resources Online

By Reba Nissen, Professional Development Team

Many of you know about our National Resource Centers for Child Welfare. There are 13 federally funded resource centers and, besides the training and technical assistance they offer, all of them have websites with a wealth of immediate resources.

Today I discovered some helpful articles on the website for the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services. You may want to visit the site and browse for yourself at <http://www.nrccps.org> or, if you're pressed for time, I've listed the direct links to three of my favorites below:

- **Protective Capacities:** This is a clear and concise listing of family protective capacities. If you're stumped about where to look for family strengths related to mitigating risk and providing safety, this is a great resource.
<http://www.actionchildprotection.org/archive/article0703.htm>
- **Analyzing Safety Threats:** Unclear about the difference between assessing and analyzing information? This article moves you from assessing safety to analyzing the information you've gathered and using that analysis to create successful safety plans.
<http://www.actionchildprotection.org/archive/article0305.htm>
- **Overcoming Decision-Making Bias Shortcuts:** This article is great for raising self-awareness. "Shortcuts! We all use them all the time. Who has not taken a shortcut to reach a desired destination or result more quickly? Shortcuts are designed to help us avoid hassles, reach preferred outcomes efficiently, and save time for other things. The experts tell us that we use shortcuts unconsciously in decision-making...Caseworkers make critical decisions everyday. How many have considered that they may be employing shortcuts that have the potential for severe consequences?"
http://www.actionchildprotection.org/archive/potpourri_0204.htm

Development



Child Development Resource Online

By Jerna Mitchell, Professional Development Team

There is a rich quantity of information on the web about child development, children's services, and approaching children at different developmental stages. One website that you may want to familiarize yourself with is Utah Early Intervention/Baby Watch at <http://www.utahbabywatch.org/>. Baby Watch is our partner in serving young children with developmental needs. This site has helpful links to other resources and a wonderful guide to child development from 0 to 3 for parents that can be just as helpful for us, located at <http://www.utahbabywatch.org/forparents/childdevelop.htm#1TO2>.

Permanency



What Is In a Word?

By Pamela Russell, Independent Living Program Manager

The Transition To Adult Living (TAL) Initiative has been gaining strength and momentum over this past year, and we have been committed to making changes that will help foster youth enter adulthood with confidence and purpose. While we have made this commitment for change, it remains difficult letting go of past practices.

Take the word "aftercare" for example. If you look in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "aftercare is the care, treatment, help, or supervision given to persons discharged from an institution (as a hospital)." I wasn't happy with this definition, so I checked 12 other dictionary resources (some that I had never even heard of), and **every one** had a similar definition. Some even included the phrase "discharged from a hospital or prison."

This is troubling to me since we make reference to providing our youth, who age out of foster care, as being able to receive "aftercare" services.

At our most recent TAL meeting, it was agreed that our "Aftercare Sub-Group" should take the lead and begin changing, not only the way we talk, but our attitude. We agreed to change our name to a more reflective, positive, and supportive name. Hence, the **Young Adult Resource Network** was born. When youth leave foster care, providing these youth with a **Young Adult Resource Network** simply feels friendlier and more collaborative. Child and Family Services is not alone in providing resources for young adults. There is an entire network available to youth. There are Mental Health and

Substance Abuse Services, and the Departments of Workforce Services, Health, and Education provide an abundance of resources. There are private non-profit organizations providing advocacy, mentoring, and economic resources.

As the year progresses, you will be hearing more about the **Young Adult Resource Network** (formally known as Aftercare Services), but let's not wait. Let's begin **now**, changing the way we perceive youth who leave foster care. Despite the significant challenges, youth leaving foster care do possess the strength and power to succeed, as long as they receive resources and support from caring adults.

By the way, Merriam-Webster says the definition of "word – is a unit of language that speakers can identify with." Evidently, there is a lot in a word.

Cultural Responsiveness



The Primer

By Dawn Hollingsworth, Domestic Violence Program Manager

Recently, the polygamous culture has come to the attention of each of us in some new ways, although our division has had a long-term relationship with many of Utah's groups. In an effort to educate the general public and assist victims within polygamous communities, the Utah Attorney General's Office and the Arizona Attorney General's Office collaborated to produce "The Primer---Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Polygamous Communities."

As I reviewed this publication, it became clear that employees within Child and Family Services might find this helpful. Within "The Primer" you will learn of the history of polygamy, definitions of terms, characteristics and practices, domestic violence and polygamy, child abuse and polygamy, and other useful resource information. This document is not put forth as the final word on all polygamy. Much hard work and many hours by dedicated people in our state, meeting in an open forum, produced this valuable tool. We appreciate the initiative they have taken. You can access "The Primer" by:

- Going to the Attorney General's website at: <http://attygen.state.ut.us/>.
- Click on "Crime and Violence Prevention."
- Click on "Polygamy."

At that point, you will be able to read, download, or print "The Primer."



Helpful Information About Refugee Families in Utah

By Jerna Mitchell, Professional Development Team

During the week of April 10-15, 2005, the Deseret News ran a series of articles on refugees in Utah. The articles are listed below, along with their websites so you can read these interesting and informative articles.

- "A new homeland." Many refugees now call Utah home.
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,600124154,00.html>
- "Life skills 101: Utah has rich history of resettling refugees."
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,600124085,00.html>
- "Staying Afloat".
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,600124045,00.html>
- "Pathway to recovery: Trauma and torture leave scars on body and mind."
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,600125446,00.html>
- "Some refugee women choosing to go it alone."
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,600125445,00.html>
- "Surviving in America: Refugee children learning the ropes of school system."
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,600126122,00.html>
- "The fruits of success: Many refugees reap rewards of work ethic."
<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,600125883,00.html>

Organizational Competence



“Needy Thinking”

By Debbie Robertson, State Training Team

I've had the opportunity to participate in some qualitative case reviews the past few months with our partners from Alabama. They have noted with enthusiasm the growth and good work they see happening. We know that a couple of areas, however, are still a challenge for many of us. The comment that I repeatedly heard from our partners was that they were seeing *services* listed as *needs*. They desired to see functional assessments and service plans that listed *needs* as needs, that flowed from the child and family teaming process, and that were individualized rather than “cookie cutter” [their term]. If this is an area of interest for you, check out the following article entitled [“Needy” Thinking: A Key to Successful Facilitation](http://www.childandfamilyteams.com/articles/needy.htm). (You may find it by clicking on the title or going to <http://www.childandfamilyteams.com/articles/needy.htm>.) It addresses just these points.

It is well written, concise, entertaining, and helpful!! I loved it! I'd like to know what you think.

Professional Competence



Save the Date!

By Reba Nissen, Professional Development Team

The 10th Annual Child Welfare Institute has been scheduled for September 26-29, 2005, at the Provo Marriott. Please [click here](#) for a flyer with a bit more information. And remember, "Save the Date"!